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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [KPAO](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: NEED TO GENERATE PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF AL QAEDA,S
RESILIENCE AND CHANGING TACTICS

Classified By: Ambassador Adam Ereli for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: Al Qaeda activity in Iraq over the last four weeks has shown that the organization is changing its tactics in response to the blows it has been dealt by the surge. We have seen a pattern of attacks using suicide bombers to target each of Iraq,s ethnic communities in an attempt to reverse security gains by fomenting sectarian violence. Embassy Public Affairs, MNF-I and the GOI are aggressively highlighting the adaptive nature of the enemy and the danger it continues to pose. Given what we are seeing in Iraq, we believe there is value to a broader public diplomacy effort in which U.S. and regional experts highlight the setbacks Al Qaeda has suffered, how they,ve reacted and what this tells us about their intentions, capabilities and the &long war8 that is still far from over. End Summary.

Al Qaeda,s Latest Attacks in Iraq

12. (C) Beginning on July 28, Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) has carried out a calculated and systematic series of attacks against Iraq,s different ethnic and sectarian communities in order to foment civil strife and create the conditions of chaos that allow it to thrive. On July 28, 25 Kurds were killed and 187 injured by a suicide bomber targeting a Kurdish political rally in Kirkuk. On August 8, a car bomb killed 21 and injured 66 in the largely Turkmen city of Tel Afar. On August 14 in Iskandariyah, a female suicide bomber attacked Shia pilgrims en route to Karbala for the Sha,abaniyah religious festival. 18 pilgrims were killed and 75 injured. Three days later, outside a mosque in Baghdad, another female suicide bomber killed the Sunni deputy head of the Sons of Iraq, along with 10 other victims.

13. (C) This pattern of violence demonstrates that AQI has absorbed the blows of the surge, adapted its tactics and introduced a new phase to its continuing campaign to undermine public order. We have initiated an information campaign to highlight this threat, including television spots, op-eds, interviews and talk shows. The message is simple: Al Qaeda remains a ruthless, relentless enemy that can change its tactics but will stop at nothing to destroy those who oppose it. They are trying to return Iraq to the dark days of 2006 by using female suicide bombers against all of its ethnic groups. They will slaughter any community, any target, to create a climate of generalized violence in which they can flourish. Iraqis must work together to consolidate security gains and remain united in the face of Al Qaeda,s continuing attempts to provoke civil war. And they are refusing to be provoked into retaliatory killings. Virtually

the only significant ethno-sectarian violence in Iraq today is that perpetrated by Al Qaeda itself.

Expanding the Circle

¶4. (C) The Iraqi example is instructive and should stimulate a broader, public discussion about what we have learned about Al Qaeda in the last couple of months. We need to remind audiences that although Al Qaeda,s tactics have changed, its strategies and values have not. Involving others in the region, such as the Saudis, who have had success in confronting al Qaeda, would be especially helpful. How do you break these extremists and their apparatuses throughout the region? How do we talk about Al Qaeda,s setbacks, how they have responded and what this says about their continuing capabilities and intentions? What are we and others doing) and need to do) to stay one step ahead of the enemy?

¶5. (C) The answers to these questions -- and how we and our partners talk about them -- lie at the intersection between the operational and public diplomacy communities. To do this right will require some creative thinking and coordination between operators and communicators. This can only be done at the more senior levels of the interagency in Washington. From our experience here, however, it is important that we take advantage of these opportunities to press our advantage in the war of ideas. Al Qaeda,s equal opportunity killing of all ethno-sectarian communities in Iraq over the past month is a story that we should exploit more fully.
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